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be much dryer and less wooded than the western face, where the monsoon rains strike. The path, which is difficult enough for the animals on the climb, becomes much worse on the descent. Only a Yunnan-bred mule or pony would face a descent of broken stone steps, steep, set at all angles, often slippery with wet mud from some oozing stream, and the animal fully laden with loads weighing up to two hundred pounds. Yet they very rarely fall, picking their way from stone to stone, jumping a mud hole, or wading gingerly through the discoloured waters of a stream. This descent may take from two to three hours, about seven or eight miles, and leads to the last section of the stage, the final two or three miles across the cultivated valley to the small town or village which is the stage point.

Sometimes, even on the main routes, as for instance on the road to Bhamo four days west of Hsia Kuan, there is a long stretch of uninhabited mountain country with no cultivated valleys or villages. Here, after toiling all day up and down wooded ranges the caravans must rest for the night at some tiny collection of huts on the mountain side. Even on the most frequented roads it is rare to see any habitations after the valley is left behind, except perhaps at the midday halting place where there are a few teahouses and food stalls. Distances are long, roads execrable, the country deserted (and formerly full of robbers), the inns, when the day is done, dirty and dilapidated. The scenery and the climate are superb, but the inhabitants, accustomed to them from childhood, see no pleasure in travelling.

Distances in China are measured by the *li*, which is approximately one-third of the English mile. As is often the case with peasants in mountain lands, the measure is a variable unit depending on the nature of the road. Thus, in flat country, a *li* is really about one-third of a mile. Ta Li

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804 to Hsia Kuan is always said to be thirty *li*, along the plain,
491 and is ten miles in fact. When a muleteer says that the day's stage is seventy *li*, which includes crossing a range, the real distance is not twenty-three miles or so, but more nearly nineteen or twenty. This is the average length of a stage, but often it is called eighty *li*, which means a full twenty miles or more, and the longest stage on the K'un Ming-Bhamo road, from Sha Ch'iao to P'u P'eng, midway between Ta Li and K'un Ming, is said to be one hundred *li*, and is in fact a full thirty miles. Muleteers always know the length of the stage, but they usually have no idea of the distance between intermediate points. If, after travelling for about half the day, one asks a muleteer how far it is to the stage point, he may reply forty *li*, or ten *li*, or fifteen, apparently unable to calculate broken distances.

491 Stage points are either small cities or villages, which in
485 wild country may be only a few houses. The administrative walled cities, *hsien*, are often not situated on the main roads, or do not form stage points if they are, but only midday halts. This may be because the muleteers prefer to avoid the seats of authority. The administrative cities are generally up to three days' journey apart, and the intermediate stage points are villages, some of which are only collections of inns living entirely on the transit trade. Inns are of two kinds, "horse inns" and "guest inns". The "horse inn" is what in western Asia is called a caravanserai, a large courtyard surrounded on three sides by stables, and a big room on the fourth side for the muleteers, with a loft for hay and fodder overhead. These inns are frequented only by the regular transport caravans, and can stable about a hundred horses a night. Guest inns are also built round courtyards, and often have two, the one at the back surrounded by stables for the riding and baggage horses of

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travellers, while the front courtyard gives access to the rooms where the guests sleep. These are small and simply furnished with trestle and plank beds covered with a straw mat, for the traveller carries his own bedding. Sometimes they may have a table and a chair or two for meals, but usually there is only one table, on the courtyard verandah, where the guests dine. Most inns are dirty, unswept and tumbledown places, "battered caravanserais," which in summer are verminous, and in winter cold and draughty. On the other hand they are cheap. If there is a restaurant attached, as is often the case, the traveller will pay under one local dollar for food and lodging, and the meals are good and plentiful. If the value of the Yunnan new dollar is taken as eightpence, before the war with Japan, the traveller need not pay more than sixpence for two good meals and his room.

Almost all inns provide rice cooked in the inn kitchen, but in small places the traveller must buy and cook his own meat and vegetables. Inns also provide rice wine, and there is generally a teahouse nearby. In towns like Hsia Kuan, where the long-distance caravans change horses, there are immense inns with a series of courtyards running back from the street, able to stable two hundred horses if necessary, and these inns let out their rooms to business houses as offices. On the same roads in small places in the mountains there may be only one inn, almost a farmhouse, with two or three rooms at most, and there the horses have to be picketed in the courtyard while the late arrivals have to doss down wherever they can find room. Accommodation is thus always poor and often very bad, but food is always good and frequently excellent. In small towns a restaurant, simply a long dark room with a cooking stove and four or five tables, provides the most tasty and delicious meals for very low prices, and the small wayside places at the midday halting

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491 points serve excellent well-cooked food. The Yunnanese
485 have no idea of comfort, yet are born cooks.

Regular transport muleteers are necessarily hard tough
492 men inured to all weathers, and independent in character. They live a life on the roads, doing a thirteen-days' stage and then back again month after month, with usually only one day's rest at the terminal points. It is sometimes customary for travellers to rest one day in seven or eight, but the regular transport caravans always make their full thirteen or fourteen days' stage without halts. Caravans number up to forty or fifty mules with one man to every three animals, the leading mules being particularly fine strong animals carrying a bell and a plumed headdress of woollen pompoms by which they can be heard and seen at a distance. These animals know every inch of the road and find their own way, the muleteers often walking well behind the caravan, for as long as the mules can hear the leader's bell they will follow without being urged. Some of the muleteers carry arms, either a pistol, an old rifle, or swords, and even in those parts of the country where "small bandits", that is to say individual footpads, still exist, such caravans are never molested, since the muleteers are both more courageous and better armed than the robbers.

492 The routine of travel followed by the caravan men is
484 curious, and to the ordinary traveller not very convenient. The men get up in the middle of the night, about two in the morning, and cook themselves a large meal of rice and vegetables, and then, when that is eaten, go to sleep again for another three hours. At six they rise, saddle the mules and start out at once without taking anything to eat. After about four hours on the road, round ten o'clock, they halt at some place where there is plenty of grass, a stream of water, and some shade trees—and in Yunnan such places are

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easy to find. The mules are then unsaddled and turned loose 492
to graze, a fire is lit and rice and vegetables cooked for the 484
midday meal. Some of the men sleep in the shade, and even after they have finished their meal they are in no hurry to depart, often spending fully two hours or more at these halting places. At last, about one o'clock, they call the mules in, each muleteer having a peculiar cry which the animals in his charge know and obey. They are saddled, and the loads lifted on, and the caravan goes on for another four hours or so until the stage point is reached about five in the evening.

The " horse inn " where they lodge is always one at the 492
far end of the town from the gate by which they enter, or at 485
the furthest extremity of the village street, to make the departure in the morning easier, as in this way two caravans bound in opposite directions do not have to cross in the narrow street when they set out almost before the sun has risen. Often the streets of a town are so narrow that two mules with their bulky packages fixed on either flank would hardly be able to pass without bumping, and the consequent confusion. As soon as the caravan enters the inn yard the leader and each mule in turn, as it comes in, is unloaded. The loads are neatly arranged in this order so that they can be placed on the right mules in the morning with the minimum delay or confusion. Each load is bound on to a a wooden frame which slips into slots on the pack saddle, and the loads can be taken off or put on independently of the saddle itself. Thus, the loads are never untied from one end of the journey to the other, and only have to be lifted on or off the pack saddles.

Once unloaded in the right order, the horses are unsaddled, each saddle being placed on the right load, and the animals are then given their feed in the stables. Not until all their wants have been attended to, do the men begin to

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492 cook their own supper. Hay and fresh-cut grass can be
485 bought in these towns on the street, or from girls who come round to the inns to sell it for about one nickel a load, or about one and one-third farthings for all a girl can carry on her back. When the men have cooked and eaten their supper, about seven o'clock or a little later, they go to sleep until they awake for their midnight meal, for there is nothing to do in a Chinese village after dark, and darkness falls about seven or eight at latest in these southern latitudes. The object of this curious routine, which seems to waste the best hours of the day in a prolonged halt, is to feed the animals free on the mountain grass, instead of having to buy more hay and fodder for them. Therefore, the early start obviates the need of buying fodder from the inn in the morning as well as the evening. No muleteer could ever give a really satisfactory explanation for the habit of rising in the early hours, eating a meal, and then going to sleep again. It is a habit which perhaps explains why other travellers do not like to sleep, or rather try to sleep, in horse inns.

Travellers not attached to a caravan do not have to follow this routine, though if they are riding mules, the men insist on a long midday halt to feed the animals free on mountain grass. The usual starting hour for travellers is eight in the morning, after taking an early meal. As this has to be cooked it means that all travellers rise at dawn, but those who travel with porters can start a little later.
482 Porters and litter carriers go faster than pack animals on
492 the flat, but have to make frequent short halts, and their pace on the steep ascents is, if anything, slower than the mules. Consequently, they do not do a longer stage than the caravans, and by the end of the day have not done the whole stage any faster. For this reason, and because it is more expensive to hire porters than to take mules,